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THE LIGHT-HOUSE ON THE SKEVE MHOIL.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

It was the 6th of September, some thirty years ago, and Jamie Gurlock's birthday. Jamie was a flaxen-haired, apple-cheeked lad, six summers old, with strong sturdy limbs, and a spirit like his father's, fearless and bold. He was in great glee this afternoon, having been allowed a half-holiday from school in honour of the day; besides which, there was to be a splendid currant-cake for tea; and, better than all, 'Mam' Gurlock was engaged in putting the finishing-touches to a new coat, bright-blue as to colour, and with beautiful gilt buttons, in which he was to be arrayed after tea, and go with his mother to the light-house, and surprise his father with an unexpected visit.

So when tea was over, and the cake duly discussed, Jamie, having had his face and hands well scrubbed, was inducted into his new coat, with strict injunctions to sit still till his mother should be ready to start—a command which Jamie's restless proclivities made it impossible for him to obey to the letter. Then Mam Gurlock packed up a little basket to take to her husband, containing a dozen new-laid eggs, a loaf of fresh home-made bread, a piece of the birthday-cake, and, on the top of all, a bunch of homely flowers, culled from the little garden in front of the cottage; then the fire was carefully raked, the cottage door locked, the key being deposited in a little nook under the thatch; and Mam Gurlock and Jamie took their way, hand in hand, up from the hollow in which the cottage was built, over the short turf of the cliffs for a quarter of a mile, and then down by a zigzag path to the sandy beach, where they found Miles Gurlock's own little boat, the *Seamew*, moored high and dry, just above the highest fringe of seaweed which the ebbing tide had washed. The boat was quickly run down to the water, and Jamie and the basket of eggs placed carefully in the stern; after which, Mam Gurlock took her seat, and pushed out boldly from shore, shewing by the way she handled the oars that she thoroughly

understood their use; and as soon as she got into deep water, began to pull steadily in a straight line for the light-house, two miles away, which stood out stern and gray from the flaming wrack of clouds in the western sky.

A tall comely young woman of six or eight and twenty, with a fresh frank face, and dark sunny eyes, was Mam Gurlock. The daughter of a fisherman, and the wife of a light-house keeper, she was thoroughly at home on the water, and never looked to greater advantage than when engaged as she was at present. She had rolled the sleeves of her lilac dress high up her white and shapely arms, and had thrown off her bonnet, and let down the coils of her dark hair, that she might have the full benefit of the cool evening breeze; and as her well-rounded figure swayed gracefully to the motion of the oars, she looked like what she was—a picture of fresh, healthy womanhood—home-spun, I grant you, but of thoroughly good material.

Jamie was quite at home on the Skeve Mhoil, having been there several times with one or the other of his parents; not so frequently, however, but that each of his visits was set down as a day of high festival in the calendar of his childish recollections. He was beginning already to find that certain penalties are attached to the wearing of fine clothes; one of them, and not the least painful, being that your freedom of action is thereby narrowed, for whereas, when Jamie had gone out on previous occasions with his father or mother in the boat, he had derived intense enjoyment from dangling one or both arms in the cool clear water, this pleasure was denied him to-day, as incompatible with the grandeur of his appearance; besides which, his mother's frequent injunctions to him to sit still became intolerably irksome after a time, and almost induced him to wish that he had left his gay finery at home, and had gone to see his father in his old well-patched coat, in which he was allowed to do as he liked. Jamie might not be sure as to all the other points of the compass, but he knew which was the north: it lay right through that bank of black cloud, beyond which lay Greenland and the country of whales and icebergs, where, in winter, the sun was not seen for many

weeks; and his uncle Harry was out there in a big ship, fishing—yes, fishing for whales; and when he, Jamie, grew up, he also would go and fish for whales—it was the only fit work for men to do. Before long, he fell to thinking how foolish he had been to refuse that extra bit of cake at tea-time, although he felt at the time that he had had enough; but certainly it would be very pleasant to munch it out there in the boat. This thought was just passing through his head, when, wonderful to relate, Mam rested on her oars for a moment, and diving deep with one hand into that wonderful pocket of hers, drew therefrom, carefully folded in a fragment of newspaper, the identical piece of cake to which Jamie's recollections had clung, and handed it to him with a smile. How delicious it tasted, eaten out there under such circumstances, far sweeter than all that had gone before!

Mam Gurlock turning to look while she was yet half a mile away from the Skeve Mhoil, could see her husband standing out on the rock to receive her; for Miles Gurlock had not forgotten that it was his boy's birthday, and had watched mother and son through his glass from the moment the tiny speck of a boat had caught his eye when it was first putting out from land. His sunburnt face broadened into a glad smile of welcome, as he secured the little craft, and, lifting out Jamie, gave him a kiss, and a rough hearty hug, not forgetting a word of praise for the pretty blue coat.

'We've brought thee a lump of cake, dad, and it's ever so good,' said Jamie; 'and some eggs, and a posy that smells as if all the garden was squeezed up together.'

'I'm right glad thou's come, Mam,' said Miles; giving his wife's hand a warm gripe of welcome. 'I was just longing to have my little *Seamew* here, when I saw thee putting out from shore.'

'Nothing wrong, dad, is there?' said Mam, turning anxious eyes on her husband.

'There is something wrong, my lass, but nothing that need frighten thee,' answered stalwart Miles. 'Old Martin was taken with a fit about an hour and a half since, and though he soon came out of it again, it has left him very weak and poorly like; so I'm going to take him ashore, and see him safe to his sister's house in Warrendale; and now that my own boat's here, I'll e'en go in that, and then I shall get back in half the time it would take me if I went in that great awkward coble of ours, which is one of the nastiest boats to pull that ever I was in in my life.'

'And what's to become of me and Jamie while thou's gone?' said Mam.

'Thou talks as if I was going to be a month away, when I shall be back in three hours at the furthest. Thou must just make up thy mind to spend a night on th' Skeve, and help Abel Rushton to look after the lamps; for since he met with his accident t' other week, he's not been up to much, and hasn't rightly got the use of his arm yet; besides, thou knows what a tiresome chap he is at the best of times, and he'd give anything rather than be left alone on the old rock when it's getting dusk. Thou can put Jamie into my berth when it's his bedtime, and I'll pull both of you ashore early in the morning; and now I'll go and fetch old Martin down to the boat.'

The arrangement was one with which Mam Gurlock was only half satisfied; but she did not

incline to oppose her husband's wishes in the matter. She would have preferred going ashore at once with him and Martin; only the *Seamew* was hardly calculated to carry more than two people, especially as the wind was beginning to freshen; and she knew how strongly her husband disliked rowing the boat belonging to the light-house, which lay moored ready for use at a moment's notice, and which would have held her and Jamie and the two men comfortably. But Mam Gurlock was not a woman given to repining; so with one little sigh of regret that her 'outing' had not been productive of quite so much pleasure as she had anticipated, she made up her mind to make the best of circumstances as they were.

Very cadaverous and ill looked Martin Gilbert, the head-keeper, as he followed Miles Gurlock down the rocks to the boat: a middle-aged man with grizzled hair, that fell to his shoulders, and with aquiline features that looked almost as keen and hard as if they had been carved out of wood. He greeted Mam with a friendly nod as he passed her, and encountering Jamie next moment, stopped to hunt in his pockets, and, after some searching, produced therefrom a penny, which that shy young gentleman was not persuaded without difficulty to accept; but having once taken it, was desirous of proceeding home without delay, that it might be at once exchanged for sweet-stuff at a certain well-known shop in the village.

Another hug of the youngster, a cheery 'good-bye, old lass' to Mam, and Miles Gurlock stepped after Martin into the boat; a shove with the oar sent her out into deep water, and then, under the long steady strokes of Miles, the *Seamew* sped swiftly on her way.

The sun was just dipping to the horizon as the two men left the Skeve Mhoil, and westward the tips of the waves were all touched with gold and rose colour; but in the north, the low black bank of cloud still hung threateningly, like a dark mountain that had come up suddenly from the sea; and the tide, as it ran swiftly out, began to wash and beat and eddy more fiercely, under the influence of the freshening breeze, against the ledges and sunken reefs of the rock on which the gray light-house was built. The trio who were left behind stood watching the receding boat till it shewed like a speck in the distance. Jamie, as soon as he got over his disappointment at not being taken ashore with his father, made up his mind that it would be very pleasant to spend a night on the Skeve Mhoil. He had manufactured a tiny fleet of paper-boats, whose evolutions he watched with unceasing interest as they were tossed to and fro on the mimic waves of a little pool left by the receding tide among the rocks.

The evening grew at once dull and chilly as soon as the sun was lost below the line of the horizon. 'Haden't thou and the lad better come up stairs, mistress?' said Abel Rushton. 'We shall do no good standing here, I reckon; and it's high time I set about lighting the lamps.'

Mam Gurlock gave a ready assent to the proposition; and after another last look, the three went up the steep copper ladder that led from the base of the light-house to the little square doorway high up in its side, through which admission was gained to the interior—Abel first, then Jamie, and Mam last of all; Jamie being beguiled, by a promise that he should see the lamps lighted, into leaving his little fleet to take care of itself. A few minutes later,

the light from the great lantern shone out clear, brilliant, and steady far over the fast-darkening sea. The dangerous reef of rocks known as the Skeve Mhoil was situated, as already stated, about two miles from the shore, or rather that ledge of it was on which the light-house was built, being the only point that remained uncovered at high water; and the spring-tides would sometimes cover even that; at other times, a strong westerly gale would often drive the waves right over it, and dash them, white and furious, against the granite pediment of the tower, and send them hissing with rage high up its smooth walls, while it seemed to look down in grim contempt at their puny efforts to displace it. But in ordinary weather, you might walk at high water twenty yards in any direction from the base of the light-house without wetting the sole of your boot. It was at low water that the hideous features of the Skeve Mhoil intruded themselves most prominently on your notice; you were then able to understand what a cruel monster it must have been in former days, how many a gallant ship must have gone to pieces against its iron sides, before it was seized and turned into a slave, and made to carry a lamp to light up its own deformity. For half a mile or more, it stretched its arms in different directions into the sea, and at low water you could see the waves breaking whitely over them wherever they came at all near the surface; but when the tide was in, there was nothing to betray what lay lurking below, all the more dangerous because it was unseen. Such dangers might now, however, be considered among the things of the past, thanks to the bright constant star which shone nightly high over the black volcanic forehead of the Skeve Mhoil.

To gain access to the light-house, you had to climb a fixed copper ladder, for some twenty or thirty feet, which brought you to a low-browed doorway in the thick wall, entering through which, you found yourself in a room, much more spacious, probably, than you had been led to expect. This lower apartment was used chiefly as a work-shop and store-room; in the middle of the floor was a square wooden trap-door, which, on being pulled up by means of an iron ring, disclosed to view an extensive aperture, in which the provisions and better class of stores were usually kept. From this room an iron staircase conducted you to the one next above it, which was fitted up with some degree of comfort, and was dining-room, sitting-room, and bedroom in one, the beds being three narrow berths, like those on board ship, raised one above the other against the wall, and shut in by neat dimity curtains. Everything, in fact, not only in this room, which the men called their parlour, but throughout the building, was characterised by cleanliness the most exquisite. A second iron staircase led from the parlour to the lamp-room, the highest point of the light-house, outside which ran a narrow gallery, whence, in clear weather, there was a magnificent view.

Mam Gurlock and Abel Rushton sat in the little parlour together, one on each side the table, with an oil-lamp burning betwixt them; the former employing herself, while waiting for her husband, in the mending of one of his old coats, for Mam always carried a housewife in her pocket; while Abel was doing his best to spell out a well-thumbed collection of country-side ballads, leaving off now and then to vary the monotony of his occupation with a few attempts at conversation. It had been

quite dark for some time past, and Miles Gurlock in the *Seamew* might be back at any moment. Jamie, contrary to his usual custom, had put in no protest this evening against being put to bed, the temptation of sleeping in his father's berth proving stronger than his desire to keep his mother and Abel company; not, indeed, that he meant to go to sleep when put into the berth—far from it; his secret intention being to enjoy the novelty of the position, and at the same time remain a silent but wakeful spectator of all that went forward in the little room. Then, as a preliminary experiment, he drew the dimity curtains close, and shut himself in from the view of those outside. His father, he thought, no doubt did the same when he came to bed, and then he would lay his head on that nice soft pillow, and draw the bed-clothes well about him, and then—ah, well, the next thing his father would do would be to go to sleep; but he, Jamie, was not going to do that just at present; no, he was going to keep awake ever—such—a—long—time. And as he breathed these words to himself, Jamie slipped unconsciously into the sweet untroubled sleep of childhood, and knew nothing more.

'I will send thee some ointment for thy shoulder by the first boat,' said Mam Gurlock to Abel, 'and thou must get Miles to rub it in for thee. It's made from a recipe of my mother's, and is reckoned very good for anything of that kind.'

'Ay, ay, mistress, I'll try it, if so be as thou recommends it; but if I don't get better soon, I must just go and see owd Dr Sampson.'

'It's time the *Seamew* was back, I'm thinking,' said Mam. 'Thou might just step outside, and look out for her; thou would see her in the moon-light a good way off.'

'Miles has nappen had to stay a while with th' owd chap,' remarked Abel; 'thou's no occasion to get anxious about him.'

'Nay, I'm not exactly anxious,' said Mam; 'only it's time he was back again.'

Abel Rushton put down his book, rose, stretched himself, yawned, and then went slowly down the staircase in obedience to Mam's request. A minute or two later, his voice was heard calling from below: 'I can just make out the boat, but she won't be here for ten minutes yet.'

Mam's grave face relaxed into a smile, and her needle shot more quickly through her work. She wanted to finish the coat before her husband got back, but she had still five minutes' work to do when she heard voices below, too far off for her to recognise the tones. Then she heard the noise of footsteps ascending outside, which came presently into the lower room; and then, after a pause, began to mount the iron staircase that led into the room in which she was now sitting. 'The footsteps of two men—those of Miles and Abel,' she said to herself, without turning her head to look, for she was just putting in the last stitches. Did Miles think she had not heard him come up, that he stood there stock-still at the top of the staircase, thinking, perhaps, to surprise her when she should turn round? Next moment saw the last stitch put in, and with an emphatic 'There!' Mam stooped, and bit her thread in two, and then, with the coat held out at arm's-length, turned smilingly to confront her husband.

The coat dropped from her fingers, and with a low cry of terror, she started to her feet at the sight of two strange faces, bent loweringly on her. Next moment, she recognised one of them, and all

the colour died out of her face, and with one hand pressed on her heart, she shrank back a step or two, crying as she did so: 'Steve Davidson, what hast thou done with my husband?'

'By the great Fiend himself, it is Janet Gawne, and nobody else!' exclaimed the man thus addressed.

He was a man of immense size and strength, with black hair and beard, and eyes to match; with large, well-shaped features, which years of dangerous warfare against whatever was good and lawful had hardened into a set expression of mingled cruelty and suspicion; and with a certain rugged ferocity about him that was not without its attractions for less bold spirits, who were willing to recognise in Black Steve the presence of a master-mind in wrong-doing.

His companion was a little, shambling, red-haired man, who squinted horribly, and walked with a limp—a villain of a far more intellectual stamp than Black Steve, by whom, as it soon appeared, he was regarded with much respect, if not with absolute fear. Both the men were dressed in a rough, half-seafaring costume; but Mam noticed afterwards that the red-haired man's hands were white and slender as those of a woman, and that his accent and style of speaking were altogether those of a person of some education.

Black Steve, when he had in some measure recovered from his surprise at finding Mam Gurlock there, or, as he called her, Janet Gawne, such having been her maiden name, gave vent to a laugh that seemed to shake the very building, so loud and uproarious was it; while poor Mam, white and terrified, crept still further away, till the wall arrested her further progress.

'Caught in as pretty a little trap as ever I see in the whole course of my life!' exclaimed Black Steve with much gusto. 'Sit down, Mr Cris; sit down for a moment, while I explain this little affair.'

Mr Cris took a chair, and nodded to his friend to proceed.

'You'll perhaps hardly believe it, but I was once in love with that white-faced cat,' resumed Steve. 'I've laughed to myself many a time since to think what a fool I was, but I did love her then, and no mistake; and I believe I should have won her, if that smooth-faced Miles Gurlock hadn't come between us; but from that day I was like dirt under my lady's feet, and there was never a kind word for me afterwards. On the night of Warrendale Fair, I, thinking no harm, tried to kiss her; but she up with her hand, and slapped me in the face, and told me her mind in a way that opened my eyes completely; and then up came Gurlock, and knives were out, and there would have been blood spilt, if they hadn't separated us by force. I swore to be revenged on both of them, and Black Steve always keeps his promises either for good or bad. If that girl hadn't jilted me, I should never have been what I am now; but that's neither here nor there. Seven years have gone by since that time, but it's all as fresh in my mind as if it had happened only yesterday. I swore to be revenged, and you will see whether I know how to keep my promise!' He brought his huge fist down upon the table with a bang, and emphasised what he had said by half-a-dozen terrible oaths.

The noise awoke Jamie, and next moment one of the dimity curtains was drawn on one side, and the

lad's pretty dishevelled head thrust through the opening. The two men were fortunately standing with their backs to the berths, and did not see the movement; but Mam saw it, and her heart gave a great bound as the thought of her child's danger flashed for the first time across her mind. A drooping of the eyebrows over the staring wide-open eyes, an almost imperceptible movement of the head, and quick-witted Jamie took the hint intended for him; he drew back in silence, the dimity curtain dropped into its place, and the wild look of terror died in some measure out of the trembling mother's eyes. With Heaven's help, she thought she could bear whatever they might choose to inflict on her, if only—if only her boy might be permitted to escape unharmed.

This little by-scene had taken but a moment to enact, and Mr Cris's shrill cackinnation, which had burst out irrepressibly at the conclusion of his friend's story, was still ringing in Mam's ears at the instant that the aspiration for the child's safety was wrung from her fluttered heart.

'As pretty a little romance of unrequited affection as I've heard for a long time,' exclaimed Mr Cris, as soon as his laughter had subsided; 'and I'm not the one to stand in the way of your revenge, Steve, my boy, although it's a sort of thing in which I never indulge myself; it's a luxury that often turns out rather expensive in the long-run. But, first of all, let us attend to business—let us accomplish the purpose for which we came here; there will be time enough to consider this young person's case afterwards—eh?'

Black Steve gave a growl of assent, and proceeded to examine the priming of his pistols.

'Will madame oblige me by taking a seat?' resumed Mr Cris in the blandest of tones, addressing himself to Mam, and pointing to a chair. Mam felt that she was obliged to comply, and sat down accordingly. 'Pardon the liberty I am about to take,' went on Mr Cris; 'but the necessities of the case must be my excuse.' So speaking, he drew from his pocket some pieces of thin cord, with which he proceeded to fasten Mam dexterously and securely in her chair, so that when he had done, she could move neither hand nor foot; and any violent effort to get away must have resulted in her falling bound and helpless to the floor; Black Steve meanwhile looking on in silent admiration at his friend's handiwork. In any ordinary case of violence, Mam would probably have begged for mercy, and not have been without hope that her prayer would be granted; but when she looked from one face to the other of the two villains in whose power she was, she saw how worse than useless any such plea would be, and maintained the stubborn silence of despair.

'I am now going to put one or two interrogatives to you,' resumed Mr Cris, as soon as he had satisfied himself that it was impossible for her to stir, 'and the more truthfully you answer me, the better it will be for your own welfare.'

'I'll answer none of thy questions, till thou or thy mate tells me what has become of my husband,' said Mam stubbornly.

'Your husband—wretch! What do I know or care about your husband?'

Black Steve whispered a word or two in his friend's ear.

'Oh, that was him, was it?' said Mr Cris aloud.

'He has been well looked after, you may be sure,' he added, turning to Mam: 'we have not forgotten

to attend to his little comforts; only it's not convenient for him to come home this evening. He desired his love to you, and begged you would not fret—no, not even if it should so happen that you were never to see him again.'

Black Steve was tickled by his friend's pleasantry, and vowed with a terrible oath that Mr Cris was the best company in the world.

A horrible misgiving took possession of Mam's heart; these men had murdered her husband, and seized his boat, and were here for some vile purpose, of which as yet she was in ignorance. And Abel Rushton, too—what had become of him? Had he shared a similar fate? As to the shape which the long-hoarded vengeance of Black Steve would take with regard to herself, she could at present form no opinion; but that its end would be death in one form or another, she could hardly doubt. If rumour spoke truly, the stain of blood lay already on the soul of Steve Davidson; and that both he and his companion would hold her life cheaply, she had every reason to believe. Well, if Miles were really gone, it hardly mattered what became of her, she thought. Ah, yes; there was Jamie! for his sake she must strive hard for her life—for his sake she must pray that Heaven's mercy might find for her some loop-hole of escape!

These bitter thoughts occupied Mam Gurlock so deeply, that she scarcely heard the question which Mr Cris proceeded to put to her, and he was obliged to repeat it before she could fully comprehend its import.

'Where does Martin Gilbert keep his store of money?'

'I don't know,' said Mam wearily, when asked for the second time.

'You lie!' said Mr Cris fiercely. 'Don't you know that, three months ago, old Gilbert had a legacy of three hundred pounds left him, and that he is such a miser, and puts so little faith in the safety of banks, that he always keeps the money by him, wherever he may be—on shore during his holiday times, and in the light-house when he is on duty? Don't you know these things, I say?'

'I know that old Martin had a bit of money left him, and that he likes to keep it somewhere near at hand; but where he hides it away, I know no more than the dead.'

'We'll soon teach you to know,' said Mr Cris with an oath. But at this juncture Black Steve touched his friend on the shoulder, and with a meaning grin drew that personage's attention to a seaman's chest placed against the wall, on which the name of Martin Gilbert was painted in large letters.

'It will be here, if anywhere,' said Steve.

'Try,' said Mr Cris sententiously, as he drew a long ugly-looking knife from one of his pockets, and felt its point appreciatively with his thumb.

The chest was locked, as a matter of course; but the skilful hand of Black Steve, with the aid of a skeleton-key, soon tickled open the simple wards. The numerous layers of clothes, all methodically arranged, were tossed unceremoniously on the floor; and Steve's itching fingers, diving here and there towards the bottom of the box, brought to light before long the object of which they were in search; with a yell of triumph he drew forth a canvas bag full of sovereigns, and flung it on the table.

Mr Cris's ugly-looking knife was put back into its sheath without delay, and the two men seated themselves at the table to count over their ill-

gotten gains. While they were thus employed, the dimity curtains opened again, and Jamie's frightened face peered through. The men were so intently occupied, that Mam could without fear signal Jamie, by sundry frowns and shakings of the head, that he must on no account allow himself to be seen. Jamie understood, and was seen no more.

'A hundred and ninety each—and a very pretty little haul!' exclaimed Black Steve admiringly, when the money had been divided into two heaps.

'The old fellow's legacy and savings all in a lump,' remarked his friend complacently.

'No doubt of it,' said Steve. 'For my part, I think we can't do less than drink Mr Martin Gilbert's health. What say you? We are not hurried for half an hour, and I daresay we shall find a drop of the right stuff somewhere about.'

'Agreed. Only find something decent to drink, and I'm your man.'

'Oh, I've been here before to-day, and I know where the stores are kept.'

'What about *her*?' said Mr Cris, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of his prisoner.

'Time enough to finish her little business, curse her! before we go,' said Black Steve; and with a diabolical laugh, he descended the staircase towards the lower room, taking with him a small lantern. 'A prize!—a prize!' he shouted next minute. 'Come here, old fellow, and give a helping-hand.'

Mr Cris jumped up, and with a last scrutinising glance at his prisoner, followed his friend into the lower room. Black Steve had, in fact, found a bale of rich stuffs and a keg of hollands, which the light-house keepers had picked out of an abandoned ship a few days before, and which Martin Gilbert had put temporarily away with the other stores.

Mam Gurlock was left alone. Now or never, she must make an effort for liberty and life. If they could only creep out unseen—she and Jamie—and get down to the boat before their flight was discovered! But in that little *if* lay the whole difficulty. It was a dangerous game to play, with the two men in the lower room, through which she would have to pass with Jamie in her arms; but no other plan that she could think of offered even the faintest loop-hole for escape. Both the men were armed with pistols; and even if she got clear of the rock before they discovered her flight, she could hardly hope to get out of range, and would they not attempt to shoot her down as she sat at the oars? Well, she must take her chance of that. Jamie must be laid for safety at the bottom of the boat; and, for her own part, it would be better to die either by a bullet or by drowning, than to fall again into the hands of these terrible men. To prevent pursuit, the other boat must be cut adrift.

'Hist, hist, Jamie!' called Mam in a loud whisper, and next moment the little face shewed itself through the dimity curtains, looking more bewildered than frightened, for Jamie had not understood half the strange expressions he had heard; and the idea of harm happening to his mother was something so foreign to his experience, that he could hardly comprehend it.

'Don't speak, but get softly out of bed, and come hither,' added Mam in a low, smothered voice. Jamie slipped out of bed with the quickness of a lamplighter.

'O Mam, what have the bad men done to thee?' he cried, forgetting his mother's caution, as he ran to her, his bare legs and feet shewing out like marble against the dark floor.

'Hush-h-h!' cried Mam with a look of terror. 'Thou mustn't speak just yet; but take that knife that lies on the table, and cut this cord that holds my arms. That's it. Now, give me the knife;' and next minute the severed cords fell one by one to the ground.

Her first act was to snatch up Jamie in her arms. 'God in heaven bless thee, my darling, and keep thee from all harm!' she murmured through the yearning, passionate kisses that fell in a shower on his face and neck. The next moment she was herself again, resolute and composed. She put the lad down with a last word of caution, drew off her shoes, and stealing on tiptoe to the staircase, went down on her hands and knees, and looked through the opening.

THE ART OF MEMORY.

As Nature has made strange fellows in her time, we are not surprised that some of her favourites should have been endowed by her with most extraordinary memories. Let us mention a few of these. Seneca says that he could, by the mere effort of his natural memory, repeat two thousand words upon once hearing them. He also mentions Cyneas, King Pyrrhus's ambassador to Rome, who in one day so well learned the names of the people whom he saw, that the next day he saluted them all, the senators and all the populace assembled, each by his proper name. Cyrus, according to Pliny, knew every soldier in his army by name, and L. Scipio all the citizens in Rome. Carneades, it is said, could repeat any volume found in the libraries as readily as if he was reading. Mithridates, the king of twenty-two nations, held courts in as many languages, and conversed with each nation in its own tongue. Cardinal Mezzofanti knew so many languages that he might have acted as interpreter-general at the Tower of Babel. Lipsius remembered all the history of Tacitus; Francis Suarez, all St Augustine's works; Avicenna, all Aristotle's metaphysics. Joseph Scaliger, when a young man, could repeat above one hundred verses, having once read them, and in the course of a few weeks could repeat the contents of whole books in foreign languages. The German poet, Klopstock, could repeat Homer from beginning to end; William Lyon, a travelling player, could repeat the whole contents of a newspaper. It is said of Magliabecchi, that a gentleman, having lent him a manuscript which he was going to print, came to him soon after it was returned, and pretending that he had lost it, desired him to repeat as much of it as he could, upon which Magliabecchi wrote down the whole without missing a word. An Englishman once went to Frederick the Great for the purpose of giving him some specimens of his extraordinary memory. Frederick sent for Voltaire, who read to his majesty a poem which he had just finished. The Englishman was concealed in such a manner as to be able to hear every word that was said. When Voltaire had concluded, Frederick observed that a foreign gentleman could immediately repeat the same poem to him, and therefore it could not be original. Voltaire listened with astonishment at the stranger's declamation, and then fell into a great rage, and

tore the manuscript into pieces. When Frederick informed him of his mistake, the Englishman again dictated to Voltaire the whole poem with perfect correctness.

Morphy and other eminent chess-players have recently given instances of their extraordinary memories. Dr Wallis tells us that he could by mere effort of memory perform arithmetical calculations, as multiplication, division, extraction of roots, &c., up to forty places. Zerah Colburn, George Bidder, and Jedediah Buxton were also wonderful mental arithmeticians. The last named once mentally calculated how much a farthing doubled 140 times would come to, and the answer was set down from his lips in 39 places of pounds and an odd 2s. 6d.; and being once asked how many barleycorns would reach eight miles, answered in 14 minutes 1,520,640. Sir Walter Scott had a marvellously retentive memory; so had Macaulay, who, it is said, could repeat from memory the whole of *Paradise Lost*. In the stirring days of Athenian political greatness, men could be found who could repeat the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; and we have read of a man in Naples who could repeat the whole of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, and not only recite it consecutively, but repeat any stanza in any given book, repeat those stanzas in utter defiance of the sense either backwards or forwards, or from the 8th to the 1st line alternately. We have heard of several persons (notably the late Blind Jamie of Stirling) who could repeat the whole of the Bible, or any required chapter or verse of it. There are besides dozens of living persons with most marvellous memories, the chief of whom is perhaps Mr Elihu Burritt, the Mezzofanti of the present day.

Now, all these are instances of extraordinary memories given by Nature, although they may have been improved by cultivation and practice. That Nature's efforts can be assisted is plain in this as in other cases; and as a good memory has at all times been considered advantageous to its possessor, it is not to be wondered at that attempts should at different times have been made to cultivate and improve it. It is now an art, and indeed has been so for a couple of thousand years. The art is said to have been discovered about 500 B.C. by the poet Simonides, who was once, as the story tells us, employed by Scopias, a rich Thessalian nobleman, to compose a song in commemoration of a victory gained by the latter at the Olympian games, a banquet being given by Scopias in honour of the occasion, to which Simonides was invited. During the feast, a message was brought to the poet that there was a young man at the gate anxious to see him. When he went out, he found no one; but while engaged in the search, the house which he had just left fell down, killing Scopias and all that were with him. The bodies were so mutilated that they could not be recognised; but Simonides, by calling to mind the place that each had occupied at the feast, was able to distinguish them; hence his attention was attracted to the important aid afforded to memory by local association and the observation of material objects. This plan was subsequently much practised among the Romans. Cicero says: 'Such are the effects of local situations in recalling associated ideas to the mind, that it is not without reason some philosophers have founded on this principle a species of artificial memory.' It would even appear from the accounts which have been handed down to us, that the ancient

orators were in the habit of connecting in their minds the different parts of a speech with the different parts of the building in which they were delivered; and this association of mental with material objects is the leading principle upon which the art of memory is founded at the present day. Some hundreds of works on this art have been published in this and foreign countries, and mnemonics has at times been so much studied, as to amount almost to a mania. In 1811, Feinaigle, a German lecturer, gave illustrations of mnemonics at the Royal Institution, and astonished a good number of his hearers by the apparently extraordinary memories of himself and pupils. Then the art of memory died out of public favour. Some fifteen or twenty years ago, an attempt to resuscitate it was made by a Polish lecturer, who, however, soon ceased to reign; but now we appear to have a revival of this long-neglected art, since the visitors to the Crystal Palace have recently, in addition 'to the usual attractions,' had an opportunity of witnessing the wonders of mnemonics; and as the public attention has thus been attracted to the subject, this is perhaps not an unfitting occasion to give our readers a little insight into it.

The following method, which is based principally upon Feinaigle's system, will be sufficient to give some definite idea of the manner in which the memory can be aided, and how those wonderful mnemonic feats, such as lecturers on the art shew us, are accomplished. We will, in fact, take you behind the scenes, and shew you the machinery which produces the display.

Take an ordinary four-sided room, and divide the floor, ceiling, and four walls into fifty squares, in the following manner. Let us suppose, for the sake of perspicuity, that the walls are numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4, and that you take up one uniform position against wall 4, with your back to the fireplace. Divide the floor into nine equal squares, or three rows of three squares each, and number them from 1 to 9, counting from left to right. In the centre of the ceiling, place one square, and number it 0, and you have thus got all the units. On the ceiling just above the first wall, put a square for 10, and then divide the first wall into nine equal squares, and number them from 11 to 19, in the same way as you divided the floor. Above the second wall, and on the ceiling, put a square for 20, and underneath divide the wall into nine squares, numbering them 21 to 29. The third and fourth walls, and the ceiling immediately above each will contain in a similar way squares numbered 30 to 39, and 40 to 49, respectively; so that, with the exception of 0, 10, 20, 30, and 40, which are on the ceiling, the units will be on the floor, the tens on your left hand, the twenties in front of you, the thirties on your right hand, while you are standing against the forties. When you have got the precise position of each square and number well fixed in your mind—and this does not require much time—you have in the next place to associate each square with some familiar object; but before you proceed to select your objects, or rather the words which represent them, it will be as well to mention that each consonant in the alphabet is numbered thus: 1, *t*; 2, *n*; 3, *m*; 4, *r*; 5, *l*; 6, *d*; 7, *c*, *g*, *k*, *q*; 8, *b*, *h*, *v*, *w*; 9, *p*, *f*; 0, *s*, *z*, *x*. Now, in the selection of your objects or words, you should select for square one a word which has a single consonant only, and that a *t*, so that, when you know the word, you

can tell at once what square it occupies by turning its consonants into figures. The vowels, as will have been seen, have no numbers. Now, let us select the word *Ino* for one of our squares. To which will it belong? To the second one, as the only consonant in the word is *n*, which numerically is 2. In the same way, the word *Nore* would belong to the twenty-fourth square, as *n* is 2, and *r* 4—or 24; and so on through the whole number of squares, it being immaterial what words are used, so long as the consonants they contain are indicative of the squares they belong to, or are associated with. For the sake of better explaining this, let us suppose that the words selected for the first nine squares (those on the floor) are 1, *Tea*; 2, *Ino*; 3, *May*; 4, *roe*; 5, *Leo*; 6, *idea*; 7, *oak*; 8, *boy*; 9, *ape*. Now, on each of the first nine imaginary squares, endeavour to make an ideal picture of the object which is associated with it. For instance, gaze intently with your mind's eye upon square one, and picture to yourself an old woman sitting before a fire drinking *tea*. Look at square two, and fancy to yourself the goddess *Ino* sitting on a rock with *Bacchus*. For square three, fancy old December leading *Miss May* to the altar; and so on for the rest of the squares, the more ludicrous being the association the easier it is to recollect the words associated. In Feinaigle's work, there are steel-plate engravings of the pictures to be made to each square, but there is no real necessity for these. You must have, however, readily off in your mind the picture-objects associated with each square, for these are the goose-steps which it is absolutely necessary that you should know perfectly. You can facilitate the operation by linking together the words in a sentence, as—*Tea* was provided for *Ino*, who always sat out of doors in *May* to drink it; varying the performance by eating *roe*, some of which she gave to her friend *Leo*, the lion, who was immediately struck with the *idea*, that he saw an *oak* tree, with a *boy* climbing up it, trying to catch an *ape*. You may have as many rooms as you like cut up into squares, so that with five rooms (and that is a convenient number to have) you would have five hundred squares all but one, to each of which would be an associated picture-word. An ordinary person would in half an hour learn a hundred squares after he has selected the picture-words with which the squares are to be associated. Of course, in the published treatises, the words are selected for you, but it is no difficult matter to select them yourself in the manner which we have mentioned.

Now, all this may appear to be very absurd and nonsensical; but wait a little while, my good reader, while I shew you how this seeming Chaos is turned into Order. Let us suppose that you have 'got up' the first nine squares thoroughly, and that you are about to make a speech on nine different topics, which you want to touch upon in a certain consecutive order, and without using notes; and let us also suppose that those nine topics are—1. *Chambers's Journal*; 2. *Apple-tart*; 3. *America*; 4. *Lord Palmerston*; 5. *Tobacco*; 6. *Ink*; 7. *Crystal Palace*; 8. *Thames*; 9. *Author*. Now, to remember these properly, you have only to make nine imaginary pictures, one for each square and word to be remembered. For square one, I should fancy you sipping your *tea* while reading this number of *Chambers's Journal*; for square two, I can fancy the word staring at my ideal picture of *Ino* eating an *apple-tart*—and so on through the remaining squares, associating the

key picture-word with the word to be remembered. You may have seen at a lecture on mnemonics a lot of little boys on the platform, together with the lecturer and a large black-board. The audience, at the request of the lecturer, name at random a hundred or so different words, having no natural connection with each other, and which are written down on the black-board by the lecturer. By once reading over those words, and almost by the time the lecturer has finished writing them down, the boys will have learned their lesson, and will be able to repeat those words, at the request of the audience, either backwards or forwards, or to give all the odd ones or even ones (although they are *not* numbered on the board), or every 4th, or 7th, or 10th, or they will tell you what is the 33d word, and what the 19th, or any other number you may require, and all this without effort. In fact, to know them one way is to know them all ways; and it is just as easy to say them backwards as forwards: and all this is done simply by associating the words named by the audience with those on the squares or key-words.

Another of the things which generally astonish the audience at a lecture on memory, is the apparently marvellous way in which a whole heap of figures is learned rapidly by heart. The lecturer puts down on the black-board a hundred figures, given at random by the audience—such as 65930069, &c. In a few minutes, the lecturer's boys, who are generally common street-lads, can repeat those figures backwards or forwards, or, if they have been placed in certain rows, diagonally from top to bottom, or bottom to top, or from left to right, or right to left; in fact, go through all the performances mentioned with reference to words. The means of doing this are as simple as those with regard to words. As we have already mentioned, each consonant is numbered. Now, turning all the figures we have just given into letters, we shall have *d, l, p, m, s, s, d, and p*, &c. Then making a word out of every two consonants, and associating that word with its key-word in proper order, the whole of the number-words can be learned off. The figures we have just given might be turned into words—thus, 1, deal; 2, poem; 3, seas; 4, dupe; you then associate these words with the key-words on the squares. The uneven numbers, you will see, commence each word, and if asked the 8th figure above given, you take the half of that number, 4, and the last consonant on the fourth square will be the figure asked for—namely, *p* or 9.

But you will say, what is the use of all this? What benefit is to be derived from being able to repeat a series of disjointed words or numbers? Not much, indeed. As Lord Bacon has remarked: 'For immediately to repeat a multitude of names or words once repeated before, I esteem no more than rope-dancing, antic postures, and feats of activity; and indeed, they are nearly the same thing—the one being the abuse of the bodily, as the other is of the mental powers—and though they may cause admiration, they cannot be highly esteemed.' But mnemonics does more than this, as we shall see. The above illustrations as to words and figures are merely given to shew you that what appears to be absolutely marvellous, is, like all wonderful inventions (to compare small things with great), one of the simplest things in the world. We do not hesitate to say, that a man with a tolerably good memory and abilities could, by

paying sufficient time and attention to the task, learn off by heart the whole of the London Directory, or Bradshaw from beginning to end, and repeat the whole backwards from memory alone. An objection which is generally put forward against this system of mnemonics is, that in course of time so many associations will have been made with the key-words as to lead to inextricable confusion. This, however, is not so in reality, no more, in fact, than F sharp would lead to confusion in playing the *Wedding March*, because the same note happens to be used in *Pop goes the Weasel*. A little practice will soon convince you of this.

In learning poetry, the above system of mnemonics is of great service, inasmuch as you can thereby always have a clue to the commencement or leading word of a line or verse. All will agree that acrostics are easier than other verses to learn, by reason of there being some clue to the commencing letter of each line. Mnemonics go further, and instead of merely the first letter, will give you the first word of the line. A friend of mine, who carries a ten-roomed house—mental, of course—in his brain, cut up into squares in the manner above mentioned, can repeat from memory the whole of *Childe Harold*, having a key-word associated with each stanza. Some people have, of course, better memories than others, and, as a rule, the fewer ideas a person has, the better his memory is; people in the lower walks of life have better memories than those of the classes above them, and can give the most detailed account of events that have long since happened. The account which Mrs Quickly gives of the promise of marriage which Sir John Falstaff made her, is a good illustration of the good memory for small things which uneducated people have, and the same peculiarity is apparent in some of Charles Dickens's characters. If you wish to ascertain whether mnemonics is really of any use in learning poetry, you cannot do better than try to learn off by heart Southey's *Falls of Lodore*, the most disjointed and disconnected piece of poetry in the English language, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult to learn without artificial aid, containing as it does about a hundred lines of this calibre:

Driving, and riving, and striving,
Sprinkling, and twinkling, and wrinkling.

It would not, perhaps, be an exaggeration to say, that with the majority of people it would be next to impossible to get up this piece of poetry from mere repetition; whereas with a couple of rooms squared out in the manner already mentioned, and associating the first word in each line with a key-word, and linking the rest of the words together mentally, and pictorially associating them one with another, an average person could learn off the whole hundred lines in an hour, and be able to repeat them backwards or forwards at discretion.

A good way to recollect dates is to make such a change in the ending of the name of a place, person, planet, coin, &c., without altering the beginning of it, as shall readily suggest the thing sought, at the same time that the beginning of the word being preserved, shall be a leading or prompting syllable to the ending of it so changed. For instance, if I wanted to recollect that the Deluge took place 2348 years before the birth of Christ, I should make the word Deluge into *Delunmark*—the consonants in italics representing the year, the first two syllables being the clue to the

event to be remembered. When you have to get up a whole string of names and dates, it is a good plan to alter the words in the way we have just mentioned, and then make the words into hexameter lines, which should be committed to memory in the ordinary way. In this manner the whole of the kings and queens of England, with the dates of their accession to the throne, might be put into a dozen lines, easy to be committed to memory from their very peculiarity. In fact, by a good system of mnemonics, it is within the reach of an ordinary individual to commit to memory the regular gradation and exact date of all the principal events from the creation of the world to the present time.

A tradesman has his private mark—generally a letter forming part of a certain word—upon his goods, each letter having its corresponding figure; so groups of figures can be turned into words in a similar way, and easily committed to memory: thus 78,450. 19. 9, can be turned into 'Charles tip up'; and the words will certainly last longer in the memory than the figures. A child can learn the key-words in a very short time, and if it can spell ordinary two and three syllabled words, it can, as I have seen practically instanced, learn the multiplication table in twenty minutes or half an hour, in such a way that it will not only not easily forget it, but will stand any amount of 'dodging.' There are several ways of teaching this, but it would be difficult to describe any of them without diagrams, or taking up more space than can be spared; suffice it to say, however, that they all have connection with the key-words and their respective numbers. Of course, there are a hundred different ways in which mnemonics can be made useful, but it is perhaps of the greatest service to those who are preparing for any kind of examination, as any amount of names and dates can by its aid be committed to memory; but it must be borne in mind, that such a system as we have above described with regard to dates, does not make the memory better, but things more easily to be remembered; so that, as was remarked a hundred and thirty years ago by Dr Grey, a celebrated writer on this subject, 'by the help of it an ordinary, or even a weak memory, shall be able to retain what the strongest and most extraordinary memory could not retain without it.'

LADY FLAVIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LORD LYNN'S WIFE.'

CHAPTER XLIV.—ESCAPED.

'SHE came to sleep one night at the Château des Roches, that she might start early on the following morning for England, under Mr Royston's escort. The places were taken in the diligence, but it was never meant that she should travel by it; I was to take her place. The doctor, the madhouse keeper, was to come and fetch her away, when we had drugged her. Mr Royston had drugs in plenty; he had a little medicine-chest full of phials and powders, that he had used of old to poison or stupify horses, and to hocus jockeys, when he had turned from a turf-pigeon into a turf-robber. It was to me that he intrusted the task of administering the drug.

'I gave it her, that poor weak girl, in some tea that I brought to her room and forced her to

swallow, after she had gone early to rest, pleading headache, and no doubt truly, for she was ill and nervous; and she kissed me, and thanked me for being so kind—I! We had been some time acquainted with one another, but there was nothing in common between us, and she had a friend in the convent who suited her far better than I did. I wished her a good-night, and I left her. In two hours I came again; something drew me, as with a magnet, to that chamber where she lay. How very still she lay—how awfully motionless and quiet was her repose! The potion had done its work well. I watched beside her; I began to long for her to wake. The quiet of her attitude frightened me, somehow; I grew alarmed. I touched her: she was cold, very cold. I put my hand on her heart; but its beating was finished. I listened for her breathing, but there was no sound; the feather I laid on her lips remained unmoved. Ah! how I shrieked and cried, and flung myself upon her, begging her, praying her to wake, clasping, chafing her cold hands, crying aloud: "Flavia, Flavia!" But she was dead—dead, dead, dead, and I had murdered her!'

'Then you did not intend it—did not intend to kill her? It was by accident, by mistake, not on purpose?' interrupted Lady Caroline with a feverish eagerness new to her.

'It was. I am too near death to speak falsely now. And I take Heaven to witness that as I stood beside the bed on which she lay, as if in sleep, I would have given my own life ten times over, ay, a hundred times, to bring her back from the grave. I called them all up into the room, I implored them to help me to revive her; but it was too late. She must have died hours before.'

'It was not a murder, then? Oh, I am so glad, so glad you did not mean to harm her. You hear, papa, she did not intend it,' cried Lady Caroline.

'Thank God for that!' muttered the earl.

There was a long pause; then she who had borne the name of Lady Flavia spoke again: 'You would judge me leniently; not so do I view my own sin. What! the lamb dies in the wolf's gripe, and it is not murder. True—I did not mean to rob her of her innocent life—I did not even design that her imprisonment should be for ever; but I meant to take her rank, her name, her fortune, and it was my hand that gave her the draught that contained death instead of lethargy. It was murder, let who will deny my words!

'The effect of that crime upon my nature was to harden it till my heart seemed of adamant. The first paroxysm of remorse and horror over, I took the lead among that panic-stricken group. Even Brand Royston was much moved; I saw tears in those fierce angry eyes of his. Basil was not so much sorry as alarmed for his own neck. My aunt, their unwilling accomplice, whom nothing but terror of her brutal husband—I must hurry on—I—'

She stopped, gasping, and again, with a sudden shivering motion, pressed her hand to her bosom. The bright colour had faded out of her face, and her cheek was blanched to the whiteness of marble,

but she stood firm as a rock, and when Lord Mortlake asked if she were ill, she waved her hand impatiently, and went on speaking.

'We buried her on the following night. All day we had watched the room where she lay, and at midnight a grave was dug in a lonely part of the neglected garden, and we hid our victim away from men's sight, but not from God! She is happy now, and I am lost, body and soul! The Fiend to whom I sold myself has cheated me out of my wages, as I cheated those who shared in my guilt, but did not profit by the dark deed.'

Here she ceased to speak. It was observable that her voice had lost its music, and its tones had grown harsh and shrill, as if the emotions of that fearful hour had exhausted her. But though her pallor grew more ghastly each moment, it was still Titania, still the fairy queen that lifted her radiant brow and clear blue eyes, defiant in her petulant loveliness even to the last. Crowned with flowers, in her floating gauzy robes, she was still more winning, more graceful than other women, as if her powerful will that had brought her to this pass had force to sustain her through all calamity.

Sergeant Skinner here interposed again with a hint that no one was bound to criminate himself.

M. Durbec spoke more to the purpose when he said: 'If Mademoiselle can prove the truth of her statements, there is no fear for her life. No French jury will find a verdict in such a case without adding that there are *circumstances atténuantes*.'

Lady Flavia's laugh, that terrible, mocking, counterfeit of merriment, was heard for the last time. 'How gallant they are in France! They would let me live, then, as a lifelong prisoner in a penitentiary! And I am so young yet; I should be nineteen in another month, if I lived. But now I can say, as Agag said to his conqueror, "Surely the bitterness of death is past!"'

There was a silence; all present looked anxiously at the lovely face; the eyes were bright still, but the very lips were white, and a sickly ashen gray had begun to spread itself over the lately blooming cheek.

'You are ill! I see you are faint, dear,' said Lady Caroline, unconscious that the familiar phrase of affection had been uttered, but advancing towards the friend she had loved so well.

Her friend waved her back; there was no resisting the gesture of half-playful imperiousness. With an evident effort, Lady Flavia spoke again, in a low weary voice. 'Have you not wondered at my frankness? I have "criminated" myself sadly, as this good English detective would say; perhaps I have my reasons; perhaps I can speak without fear. Did you never read of that condemned wretch, the apothecary in Sir Walter's novel, he who shewed a little silver pen, and said that by the help of that pen he could defy all the power of the Black Douglas? So I—I, Flavia Clare—I, Adela Burt—can escape all the jailers, and guards, and *mouchards*, and executioners of the French emperor and the French law. I have a talisman, a charm—a'— She said no more, but clung to the chair with a quick convulsive clutch, and her dauntless eyes grew dim.

'I thought as much, *mon dieu!*' exclaimed the French policeman, and he and Sergeant Skinner sprang forward. But before they reached her, she whom we have called Lady Flavia fell with a crash, and lay writhing on the floor. '*Tron de*

Fair!' exclaimed Durbec in mingled wrath and sorrow; 'she has cheated us! she has escaped the guillotine and the prison, *la malheureuse*. She has poisoned herself, and she is dying—dying—or dead.'

CHAPTER XLV.—DEATH.

Yes—poisoned—dying. There was no doubt now, and there was little hope. As she lay groveling, like a crushed worm, upon the floor, all present forgot her guilt at the sight of her, and hurried forward to help her. The earl assisted in raising her from the floor. They laid her on the bed where she had tossed sleepless through many a weary night. She lay still enough now, but that she writhed, and that she had bitten her lips till the blood sprang. But she uttered no word of complaint, no cry, no moan. Yet that she was in great pain was only too certain; there was the cold damp of agony on her forehead, her eyes were half closed, and there was foam upon her wan white lips. They laid her on her bed. In her left hand, the hand she had kept constantly hidden beneath her scarlet cloak, they found a tiny glass phial; the glass had actually given way, crushed under the frantic pressure of that little soft hand. The phial was labelled 'Aconite.' It contained traces of a strong preparation of the deadly drug, and the analysis afterwards shewed that its contents had been mixed with strychnine. That it came from the little oak-chest that Lady Flavia had been used to keep in the ormolu cabinet, and which bore Brand Royston's cipher in tarnished brass, was manifest. The little medicine-chest, half full of various poisons, stood among the jewels on the dressing-table.

Not a word, not a groan; silent and stoical as an Indian warrior at the torture-stake, she bore it all. Lady Caroline, hardly conscious of the effort, flung aside prejudice and pride, and all her woman's nature rose into action.

'I will not leave her!' she exclaimed passionately; 'do not make me leave her! O look, look at her as she lies helpless and so changed, and think what she was a few short hours ago!'

And Lady Caroline, than whom there was no better woman, so far as routine and education allowed, and who never harboured even a sinful thought, sat down on the bed, and took the sufferer's passive head upon her lap, and tried to soothe her as if she had been a sick child.

'Send off for help! Let some of the men ride as fast as possible for Mr Sankey—for Mr Bramber—for any doctor, and send the women here—not all of them—only Benson and her own maid—do not let them all come in to stare at my poor, poor darling. Go, pray, go!'

Lord Mortlake, whose slow mind had been quite stupefied at first, went quite meekly to do his daughter's bidding. Quietly, too, the detectives left the room. Sergeant Skinner went to tell the superintendent that he might call off his men. There was no need to watch the doors now; there would be no prisoner to escort to Chartley. The sergeant and his French ally must remain in the house, of course, but their presence was little more than an empty form now. Their warrants were superseded by a summons in the grisly handwriting of the King of Terrors.

'Didn't I say,' grumbled out Durbec as he went down stairs—'didn't I say she had the heart of a

lion! *Pauvre petite!* there's many a brave soldier that could not have borne that torment, burning, gnawing, and yet smiled and smiled to the last, *parbleu!*

Soon the alarm spread through the house that Lady Flavia was dangerously ill—perhaps dying—and horses were saddled, and grooms galloped off in hot haste in search of Mr Sankey, of Mr Bramber, of any doctor within reach. Lord Hythe, glad to be of use, glad to be employed in anything that entailed stir and bustle, and would distract his thoughts from the reflection that his reticence and selfish caution had perhaps precipitated the death of her to whom he had once offered his hand, rode off, outstripping the others, to bring help. Mrs Benson and Simmons came hurrying up, loud in exclamations of distress and horror, but Lady Caroline sternly bade them be silent. It was evident that there was no hope; the poison had fastened its fangs too deeply upon the system, and those around that couch of pain could do nothing, ignorant as they were, and only longed and listened for the surgeon's coming.

Throughout the house, there reigned a gloomy silence; no one spoke above his or her breath, as if there was a fear of disturbing the sufferer. The hideous word 'poison' had not been spoken openly, but it was stealthily passed from one to another. Mingled with the wonder, the excitement, the curious sense of what may be called satisfaction, with which the news of some great misfortune is sure to be received by those whose hearts are not stricken by the blow, was real sorrow. There was genuine regret alike in the blue drawing-room, where Lady Mortlake and her daughter Lady Julia sat weeping, and in the servants' hall, where a crowd of pale faces confronted one another, and where no topic was spoken of but one—will she live or die! The spoiled darling, the noble heiress, the wilful, lovely girl, that, like some tiny bird with jewelled plumage and wings flecked with gold, that flutters in at the open window of some settler's dwelling, far off in the tropics, and falls dying on the floor, bruised by a careless grasp, had been the pride of Harbledown—was snatched away. Nor was illness the only unwelcome guest in that mansion—the grief and shame of detected guilt—imperfectly understood by some—merely guessed at in random fashion by others—had been beforehand with this calamity.

Meanwhile, Lady Caroline watched over the prostrate form that lay on the bed, with the scarlet cloak yet streaming, unfastened, over the crushed ball-dress, and the white flowers yet gleaming from amid the loosened masses of the ebony hair. There was something in that Spartan silence, that strange despairing courage, that would not permit a moan or a shriek to escape the haggard lips, which distressed those who stood by, helpless. If she had uttered so much as a word of complaint, that would have been a relief to those about her. But no; she bore it all, mute and patient. It was terrible to see how the young life fought against the poison; terrible to mark the struggle before that rich youthful vitality could be conquered by the insidious venom that made its way unchecked through the blue veins. A wild fancy possessed Lady Caroline then, and to her own dying day she will probably retain the impression; that fancy was, that if her wretched friend had wished to live, her *will* would in itself have had power to retard the effects of the fatal drug, and

that she might have been saved. But Lady Flavia did not wish to live.

It was piteous to note how she turned away her poor little white face, as if unwilling that the bystanders should see the ghastly change that had come over it. She buried her face in Lady Caroline's lap, and lay quite still, except that a quick convulsive shudder made her bosom heave from time to time. But it was a touching sight—the feminine vanity that endured to the last, the wish to hide her blasted beauty from the eyes of those who stood around to see her die. How slow the doctors were in coming! How could they linger so? Would no one come? Surely there was hope while life remained.

'Flavia, darling, try to live. We will save you. You judge your fault too harshly. You are so young. Try to live. Speak to us, dear, if only one word.'

She made no answer. But the white slender arm, with the diamonds yet sparkling on it, as if in mockery, moved a little, and the cold little hand was laid in Lady Caroline's hand, and the weak fingers closed in a feeble pressure, and then lay passive. The hand was very cold now; the fair face was cold as snow, and the convulsions were more rare.

Twice she spoke, after a long delay, but her voice was thin and weak, and Lady Caroline had to stoop forward to catch the words: 'Cast me out, as the cursed thing I am. Bury me where the nettles and grass grow the thickest, in the paupers' corner of the churchyard.'

The second time that her whispering voice was heard was the last: 'It is very dark,' she murmured, 'and so cold! I am very cold. Have you left me? I wish I could pray.'

'No, darling,' said Lady Caroline; 'I am with you; my arm is round your neck. But pray, Flavia, pray, and I—Do you hear me, dear?'

No answer. She never spoke again; she never stirred. The dreadful silence was only broken by the sobbing of the two frightened women, Benson and the maid. Lady Caroline bent over the passive form, and her heart prayed that the sinful spirit might find pardon at the mercy-seat of God. Long before the surgeon came there was no other trace of life than the feeble breathing that still continued—no warmth, no pulse in the cold arm around which the diamonds were clasped.

She was still breathing when Mr Sankey arrived. Lord Hythe had reached his house the first, and he had lost no time; but his coming was useless. He knew what had occurred. He entered the room with a face in which the women could read no hope.

'A doctor is useless here—it is too late, too late by hours,' he said, as he listened to the breathing, all but extinct. Five minutes more, and the breathing ceased. The surgeon pressed his hand upon the sufferer's heart—it beat no more.

'You had better go down, Lady Caroline,' said the doctor gently.

Lady Caroline looked up with a start. 'Is she dead?'

'Yes.'

They laid the yielding head upon the white pillow, over which the black hair streamed heavily; they covered the marble face, and, slowly and reverently, they left the room to the tenancy of death.

CHAPTER XLVI.—AND LAST.

'Earth to earth—dust to dust!' the solemn words of the sweet and sorrowful old liturgy were duly read over the grave of 'our dear sister departed.' We don't war with the dead now; we have done with the barbarous stake, and the rude pit dug at the cross-roads. Our coroners' juries, like Ariel, 'do their spiriting gently,' and not many of the miserable wretches who rush red-handed before the judgment-seat are denied Christian burial. Lady Flavia—the false Lady Flavia—the real Adela Burt—was carried to her grave with decorum, and with such pomp as a Slochester undertaker could contrive. They did not give her the crimson-velvet coffin, the silver-gilt handles, the velvet pall, that she had once anticipated. They did not lay her where the Clares lay in their coroneted coffins, under hatchments and stained glass, and escutcheons in carved stone, in the family-vault of Lambhurst Church. It was at Chartley that they buried her. The parish churchyard, choked with dead, has been condemned long since under the Intramural Act, and Chartley town has a pleasant cemetery, where rose-bushes grow beside the graves, and where the head-stones rise white above turf and flowers—there they left her to her long sleep; and the marble mausoleum over her head, railed in with iron, and surrounding an enclosure gay with buds and blossoms as the merry summer-time comes round, bears an inscription that perpetuates the lie of her life, for it is in memory of 'Lady Flavia Clare.'

And she, the true Lady Flavia, the murdered girl whose harmless life had paid the penalty of her mother's sins, was hidden away in death as she had been hidden in life. Not without trouble and importunity was permission obtained to remove her body to England, after much hindrance and conflict with the vigilant French officials and the logical French law; for France likes to keep her custody of the dead who die in her boundaries, and it required a word from the Emperor himself to thaw the frost of bureaucratic etiquette. But at last the innocent daughter of Francis Earl of Mortlake was laid in the family-vault, quite privately, as if her kindred were ashamed of the coffin that bore 'F. C.' on its silver plate. But then it was a great thing to avert scandal, and not to destroy the quiet of the earl's family, and the matrimonial prospects of the earl's daughters.

There was no inquest at all. Most fortunately, the coroner was a brother of Ebenezer Hart, gentleman, Lord Mortlake's land-agent. Mr Hart, whose name had been implicated slightly in the disclosures made by the detectives, was clearly given to understand that his snug salary depended for the future on his success in putting the matter in a proper light to his brother. Job Sankey, M.R.C.S., certified to the cause of death, and so did Mr Bramber, and so did old Dr Tench from Slochester. Their report was, that the sudden death of the Lady Flavia Clare was occasioned by *angina pectoris*, to which there was a constitutional, and indeed hereditary predisposition; her mother, the vicar's daughter, had died of it; and as *angina pectoris* it was no doubt entered in the Registrar General's annual summary, and there read of by the curious.

No; there was no inquest. Lord Hythe and Lord Mortlake went up to town, and saw important personages, whose letters were dated from

Downing Street and Whitehall, and great interest was employed; and a commission, consisting of a silent gentleman and a talkative doctor, came down before the funeral, slept one night at Harbledown, viewed the body, and went back to headquarters; and that was all. How the surgeons reconciled their consciences to their certificates, is their own concern, but it is certain that they signed their names with all proper flourishes, and that they paid their quarterly bills that year with more ease and readiness than was usual with them.

The two Slochester papers, the one Chartley paper, the *Gazette*, that enlightened the Honeycombe reading public, were conveniently deaf and dumb. Even the correspondents of London journals, who, when they shaved, were pretty well understood to use the razors that belonged to the editors of the county newspapers, and whose clipped paragraphs in the penny dailies bore a truncated resemblance to the long leaders in the county weeklies, were silent. They never seemed to hear any of the whispers that passed from end to end of the shire respecting the strange business at Harbledown. There are golden quinsies to be caught elsewhere than in Athens, and Demosthenes was not the last sufferer from that lucrative complaint.

Gold poured like a river through the district, stopping indiscreet mouths, checking venal pens, putting down the slide over that obtrusive lantern the bull's-eye of which is perpetually being turned on private life, and converting it into public property. Sergeant Skinner, whose occupation, like Othello's, was done, and who was as free to enlist in a fresh cause as ever was Major Dalgetty, went everywhere, hinting, nodding, wheedling, browbeating, and raking up little secrets of the past lives of troublesome people, as if to remind them that they lived in glass-houses, and had better act accordingly; and so the scandal was averted.

Why not? No doubt, if there had been the slightest reason to suspect foul-play, all the money in England, and all the influence of the titled race of Clare, with half the House of Peers to back them, would have failed to stifle inquiry. Neither press nor minister would for a moment have countenanced the suppression of a crime against the sanctity of life. But this was not a case in point. Why worry an earl, why torment the most respectable of countesses, and, above all, why spoil the marriage prospects of her daughters—and throw an ugly haze of unjust suspicion around the name of that rising young statesman, her son? Why not let the poor suicide rest in peace? No one was the worse, except the photographers—who would have sold thousands of vignettes of Harbledown and the Château des Roches—and the *blâsé* London public, that had been cheated out of a sensation article in the *Semaphore* and the *Ori Flamme*.

It is not the first time that things have been hushed up and made pleasant. Did you never hear the story of Lady Fakinton and the jewels that lay on the dressing-table of her guest Lady Plunkett, then a visitor at Pickhamsted House, along with the alderman her husband? It cost the Most Noble the Marquis three thousand or more of his spare cash to replace the missing diamonds with a set equal in value to the brilliants that her light-fingered ladyship had appropriated. Kleptomania was not invented then, but the result was much the same as if it had been; and it was fortunate that the purloiner of the precious stones was not a poor kitchen-maid, whose blood was not blue

enough to excuse a transgression against the prosaic common law of England.

Was Lady Fakinton's a solitary case? Well, not exactly. There have not been many, but there have been a few. And it is more safe to annex a fifty-guinea bracelet that you don't want, than to steal a loaf that you do. The Clares were fortunate in keeping the secret a secret still.

Rumour, with her thousand busy tongues, could not be absolutely gagged. There was much talking, but the guesses were random, and the assertions preposterous. The old ladies in the Outer Close of Slochester discussed the mystery over their tea, as did the dean's guests over the sound old deanery port. There was babbling in milliners' work-rooms, and in what are facetiously called the still-rooms of country mansions. On ale-house benches, at the covert side, at church-doors, where the smock-frocks and red cloaks gathered before the afternoon service should begin, and wherever human beings met, something was said of the queer affair at Harbledown. But fear of the law of libel, fear of giving offence to a powerful neighbour, who was to be lieutenant of the county at the next vacancy, and whose son was a knight of the shire expectant, combined to stop the murmur from swelling into an outcry.

No one really knew the ins and outs of the business, and the few who could have enlightened the public were provokingly discreet. The superintendent of police suddenly bethought him that his best course was to emigrate, and to go into partnership with his brother the wine-merchant at Melbourne. Accordingly, he put fifteen thousand miles of brine between himself and the good folks of the county: and it was whispered that Lord Mortlake had lent him the necessary capital for his new undertaking.

Big Ben, the keeper, was huddled out of England in a more unceremonious fashion. It was well enough known to Lord Mortlake that he had fired the shot that wounded Captain Royston; and that he was a rogue in grain was soon proved by the inquiries of Sergeant Skinner. But he could have made damaging revelations, and there was not evidence enough to secure his conviction for the attempt to murder. The detective accompanied him and his family to Liverpool, and never left them until the outward-bound ship had dropped down the Mersey. Big Ben went off with full pockets; but the money carried no luck with it, and it went in Bowery taverns and low groceries, gambled and squandered away. Then the ex-keeper embraced the dangerous profession of a 'bounty-jumper,' enlisted and deserted in rapid succession, and no doubt robbed Mr Chase's exchequer of a great many greenbacks. His career was finally cut short by sentence of a Federal court-martial in Kentucky, and he was shot, along with five others, *in terrorem* of the class that he represented. Mrs Haynes and her children came home in rags, and Lord Mortlake's good-nature kept them from starvation or the work-house. Jane, who bartered the miniature for the famous yellow shawl, is married to a tipsy German, who keeps a *lager* beer saloon in New York, and who has spent her ill-got money, and beats her.

M. Duvalliers-Hardouin has never ceased to feel that, but for an unhappy fatality, his fortune would have been made, and his promotion assured, by the brilliancy of the *cause célèbre* that he had nursed so tenderly. As it was, he is not much nearer to the

well-paid indolence of a senator than before the *procès* commenced. He has gained a step, and he is in Paris, and that is all. The wretched trial that ensued at the spring assizes was, as compared with the superb display that he had hoped for, much what the hunting of a bag-fox appears to a sportsman of the true breed.

Basil Royston was tried, not for the murder of his father's guest, but for his share in the resistance to the arrest, and his complicity in the death of the gendarme who was killed by Brand Royston. It had been agreed upon that the coward's life was to be spared. The Procureur did not even demand his head; and the sentence of the court was fifteen years of *travaux forcés*. The ex-captain, the ex-dandy, lady-killer, and pigeonier of newly-joined ensigns, is working out his time, in chains and a suit of serge, among the galley-slaves at Lambessa.

Mrs Royston, with the consent of the public prosecutor, was acquitted. Her health and her feeble mind were quite broken. She was brought into court a palsy-stricken old woman; and she dwells now in a Yorkshire farmhouse, with some distant relations, who claimed the custody of her for the sake of her little income, and sits with nodding head and bleared eyes beside the chimney-corner.

As a matter of course, Amy and Charles Ford are married, and there is every reason to hope that the young couple may be happy ever after, like the good boys and girls of the dear old fairy tales. Charles is a magistrate in Ceylon now, and Colonel Ford has a pretty house, the milkthorn hedge of whose garden touches that of his son-in-law's demesne; and both lie in a lovely nook among the forest-covered hills, with the broad blue sea shining far away beyond the coffee-groves, and the white city and its tall-masted ships smiling cheerily within visiting distance.

Cupley Lees and Melshot Friars passed to the Mortlake family of right, though whether the earl inherited the estates as heir-at-law to the late lord, or to the true Lady Flavia or the false one, was never very clear. But the family solicitors were very fussy and important, and their annual bill of costs was very comfortably swelled by the transaction.

Lord Hythe, member for the county now, and a Lord of the Treasury and privy-councillor, is regarded as a rising statesman, who may, in a score of years or so, be qualified for some post really worth having. The Right Hon. the member for Blankshire is still unmarried. At the earnest wish of his parents and sisters, he has more than once thought seriously of taking to himself a wife, that the coronet of Mortlake may not be consigned to the limbo of extinct peerages. As yet, he has found no one sufficiently to his taste, and the House and its blue-books absorb most of his time; but there is still hope that some of the maidens of Belgravia may be the future countess.

And she—the beautiful, guilty thing—is she forgotten in that household of which she was for a few short months the wonder and the idol? Not so. More tears were shed, more sad thoughts threw a shadow over the brows of those who remembered her as she once was, for this strange girl, whose rare gifts had proved fatal to their possessor, than stern moralists might have approved of. Sinful, desperate, unscrupulous, as evil teachings and her own reckless ambition had made her, the strong, bright spirit had still struggled upwards

at times to the purer light, and even the dullest could feel what Lady Flavia Clare might have been. Melancholy words are those. Alas! how many a blasted career, how many wrecked hopes, what good qualities perverted, what pure souls stained, are comprised in that one familiar phrase—*might have been*.

THE END.

IN THE WESTERN WORLD.

THE gold of California is only one among the number of its treasures, and is the least of its wonders. Its terrible value and meaning in this world gives the precious metal a significance and importance beyond those with which any beauty or grandeur, any solemnity or might, can invest those features of nature which need only to be looked upon, and exact no toil but that of travel; otherwise, gold might almost be forgotten in the presence of the splendid revelations of the western world.

California occupies but a small space upon the map of the western hemisphere, where its coast, washed by the waters of the Pacific, is immediately defined to the eye by the musical, meaning Spanish names, contrasting with the hard, common-place English, or fantastic Indian nomenclature of the other western states, further north, and of British Columbia. These names are a poem in themselves, and their mere sound transports us to a fairyland, whose border is Los Angeles, whose portal is the Golden Gate, whose sentinel cities are an army of saints, whose sovereign and life-giving river is the Sacramento, in whose recesses is El Dorado. Who could journey on a fairer quest than into the kingdom of the sunset, beyond the multitudinous Pacific seas? Never heed the gold-mines, or the 'water privileges,' or the needs and triumphs of commerce and colonisation; but let us go in the train of the hunter, the artist, the explorer, through a portion of this wonderful land, than which the imagination can compass nothing more sublime or beautiful, or liker, as our fancy pictures it, to that unknown region where God walked with man in the morning light of the world. The great continent of the West has nothing to shew which has not its example here: lake and forest, mountain and mine, smiling pasture-land and terrific ravine, dizzy heights and gloomy, frowning depths, and the mighty voice of never-silent water-falls; while the enormous magnitude of the scale on which nature has wrought, as though in a mood of magnificent self-assertion and gorgeous caprice, sets a distinctive stamp on the state of California.

The waters of the Pacific Ocean pass through the narrowly-severed headlands of the beautiful coast, known as the Golden Gate, and form a fine picturesque bay, dotted with islands, each remarkable for some curious distinctive feature. A voyage by these islands is a fitting preparation for the wonders of the Calaveras groves of mammoth trees. When the sea is changed for the river, there is even an increase of beauty, as the steamer winds through the tortuous course of the broad and sparkling water, by the new but stately cities of Stockton and Sacramento, beyond which the great range of the Sierra Nevada stretches its wide expanse of white and rose-coloured snow; and the grand dark pine-forests shelter the prosperous villages which fringe the banks with a desultory

line of building and of population. On all sides, animal life abounds; and along the line of the mountain-range, large lurid fires, kindled by the Indians, send their swaying flames back against the sky. Past mining towns, where the traveller would willingly linger, and watch the process of wringing treasure from the earth's reluctant bosom, but that this journey ignores the fascination of gold; past the cañons, where flowers, in countless varieties, and of strange beauty and subtle perfume, clothe the rifts and ravines, even to their ridges; by groves of oak and pine, affording grateful shade beneath their stately whispering branches; and then into the deep heart of the majestic forest, where the pines are two hundred feet in height, and the scented glades wind away through them in seemingly endless vistas of distance: so lies this marvellous way.

Within four miles of the mammoth groves, the prospect widens out, and the surrounding mountain peaks and ridges are distinctly visible. There is the uncovered head of Bald Mountain to the south-east; to the west is the continuous girdle of the coast mountain-range, and the snowy sweep of the Sierra Nevada bounds the splendid scene. Such are the accessories and surroundings of the mammoth groves. To persons who love trees, who recognise and revere their beauty, their grandeur, their old-world, time-worn venerableness, who remember how

From our cradle-bands to our coffin-boards,
We're in debt to the forest trees;

who look at these marvellous objects with a present consciousness that they record antiquity coeval with the most ancient remains of art which science and wealth have disinterred, the sight must be one never to be surpassed or forgotten. Mr Hutchins's book on *Scenes of Wonder in California* gives curious and interesting details of these wonderful trees; but the details are far less impressive to the mind of the reader who follows the traveller with his fancy, than the grand conception of the whole. A forest of trees in the wilds of the western world, which are to all the stateliest forest lords of this hemisphere as Homer's heroes and goddesses are to Dean Swift's Lilliputians, each known by a distinctive and poetical appellation; a forest which has seen the circle of the seasons fulfil itself for three thousand of our years, unknown but to the unreasoning, and, probably, unadmiring eye of the wandering tribes of Indians. It adds a little, but only a little, to the effect of so wonderful a scene, when we learn that 'the Burnt Tree' lies on the earth, hollow, that a man on horseback can ride within it, a distance of sixty feet; that on 'Big Tree Stump,' thirty-two persons danced four sets of cotillions at one time, in the presence of several musicians and lookers-on; and that a double bowling-alley has been cut out of the stem of one of the fallen mammoths. The groves of Calaveras are places to linger in—places to fill the mind with awe and wonder, and intensify its longing for power to read the story of time backward, and learn if the solitude of their early time was ever broken by any human intrusion.

But beyond the groves are the caves, as wonderful, and if not so beautiful, only less so because they are awful and mysterious, and their sublimity is hidden from the light of day. The world knew nothing of these subterranean

splendours until fifteen years ago, when one of the most graceful and fantastic stories of the *Arabian Nights* found a realisation in the history of Captain Taylor's discovery of the caves of Calaveras. Captain Taylor was engaged in mining on O'Neill's Creek, fourteen miles west of the mammoth groves, and he and his party amused themselves, after their mid-day repast, with rifle-practice. One day it occurred to him to place the mark at a wider range, and he was looking for a tree upon which to fasten it, when he saw a hole among the rocks. He looked closer, and perceived that it extended far into the mountain, so he and his companions began to explore it. The small mining town was in a wild romantic country, full of tangled vegetation, and masses of irregular fantastic rock, behind a jutting angle of which the entrance to a world of wonder had hidden itself for countless ages. The explorers passed along a path which descended rapidly at first, then lay level for thirty feet, then suddenly emerged into a noble chamber, sixty feet long, and twenty broad. Tenantless, from the beginning, and silent, this grand room revealed its proportions, by the light of adamantine candles, to the curious and awe-struck gazers; and as their eyes became accustomed to the solemn height, they noted its irregular roof, at some places thirty feet high, and scanned its noble proportions, and saw that beyond it another distance stretched. Then they called the apartment, in which, so far as we can know, no human voice ever before had sounded, 'the Council Chamber'; and passed on to others, beautiful and awful, in the silence, as they approached, and sublime, indeed, as the light inadequately revealed their immemorial secrets. At last they pass to one in which all the weird, magical, majestic beauty of the subterranean dreamland culminates; they leave the Bishop's Palace for the Bridal Chamber. The fairy 'who spoke pearls' could alone adequately tell the splendours of this scene, and they must have burst upon the astonished explorers as though her wand had revealed them. Art could never have devised, or the cunning of the artist reproduced them; the dreams of medieval architects, entranced by beauty and illuminated by faith, could not have borne them; the gorgeous fancy of eastern poet or western romancist never realised such magical beauty as that which first revealed itself to this little band of strangers in a strange land. An immense chamber, of stately height, whose extent deceived the eye by its lavish wealth of ornament; a dome hung with countless clusters of stalactites, like glistening brilliants, in every conceivable variety of form and size; walls, sheathed with fluted columns of stalactites, gracefully disposed, and fashioned as if for pedestals to hold statues of the kings and princes of a buried world. Stalactites, pendent, like floating banners, heaped together in masses of spear-shaped shafts, like trophies of arms, draped like curtains, loosely lying about, like snowy garments hastily flung down by a disrobed beauty—an enchanted princess—to be found, perchance, in her charmed slumber, far away in the white distance, where the light sheds a ray upon 'endless colonnades.' It may be that they had some such fancy, and were seeking her, when they came upon that wondrous fairy stairway, seemingly of crystal, hung in air, from which the reflected rays glanced through the myriads of varying forms, the pillars, the pendants, the carved work, white as snow, and translucent as

crystal, and glistened and sparkled with an inconceivable glory not to be told in words. To beauty rejoicing the eyes and the heart, is added the subtle spell of delicious sound in this underground palace of enchantment. Behind the Bridal Chamber is the Hall of Music, where a marvellous stalactite, like a sounding-board, is suspended from the roof; and to its side a long line of stalactites adheres, which the explorers struck with a rod, and produced from them all the tones in their gradation, so that, at the last, a clear glad note of high-swalling music rang through the buried halls. With this chamber, the space at present explored terminates.

The natural bridges of Calaveras County rank next to its wonderful caves in their marvellous structure and capricious beauty. They are on Stanislaus River and Cayoto's Creek, and the entire flood of the creek runs beneath them. As the travellers pass along the stream, the upper bridge breaks upon their sight—a noble Gothic arch of massive stone-work, thirty-two feet above the rapid water, and twenty-five feet in width at the abutments. Over this strange masonry is a mass of rock and earth thirty feet in thickness. The fact of a natural bridge is remarkable; but the chief wonder and beauty of these consist in the perfect form and regularity of the arch, which rises in the centre to a height of fifty feet, and is gorgeously adorned with pendent stalactites. As the amazed traveller passes under it, he feels as though he were suddenly placed beneath the roof of an immense Gothic cathedral, with its vaulted arches supported by innumerable columns, and its lavish decorations superb and complete.

From the trees, the caves, and the bridges, we go on to the mighty mountain of Shasta, at the head of the Sacramento Valley, eighteen thousand feet above the sea. It stands in an awful solitude, in isolated grandeur, apart alike from the Sierra Nevada and the coast range. Snow-crowned, pine-girded, vast, and majestic, the eye turns ever to this monarch of the mountains of the West, as it turns to Ararat or to Kuli. The fertile and flower-decked valley lies at immeasurable distances beneath and around, and from the mountain comes a whispering voice of fascination, to whose 'Come hither,' few have been found courageous enough to reply. Wrapped in white robes, the snow-drapery of ages, the sentinel of the western coast holds his watch, seldom broken or shared by human company. One man, who scaled its awful height, and explored its wondrous and terrible recesses, quite alone, has given us a graphic and beautiful account of his journey, which seems like one of the tales of the old enchanters in its loneliness and fascination, in its lingering around the semi-mystic precinct, in its sudden and fantastic revelations of the sublime and terrible workings of nature within her unassailable fastnesses, in its gloom, its danger, and its rapture. Up the sides of the giant mountain, through the gloomy ravines, and on the blind snow-trail, went the traveller and his patient horse; by the lurking-places of the small but fierce lions, and the huge grizzly bears, which prowl in the clefts and rugged places of Shasta. On and on, and up and up, until the way became impassable for the four-footed farer, and his master fed, and bade him adieu. Then, on foot and alone, M. Diehl continued his task, amid the silence of a place where the sound of man's joy or sorrow, or the hum of his industry, has never been heard; a silence

broken only by the sullen fall of huge masses of rock from the jutting heights into the sullen depths beneath. On and on, for hours, treading on lumps of broken stone, his only footpath, went the traveller, and ever deceived by the illusions of the pure and glowing atmosphere. Anon, emerging from a ravine, on, as he supposed, the summit, vast fields of snow, of lava, and of scoria lay before him. Then came a terrific portion of his undertaking, for he had to cross fissures a hundred feet deep, and varying from one to three hundred feet wide, worn through the solid mass of conglomerates, and sometimes half-filled with snow and ice—the ice lying in perfect ridges, like ocean waves. A fall here, and he must have been dashed into atoms, thousands of feet below. On and on again, and another vast ice-field is reached; and as the traveller gazes down into the fissures which intersect it, he sees the source of the great river, the Sacramento, which runs through the deep gorges, sometimes on top, again hidden, then appearing at the summit of hills, anon concealed for miles, then breaking forth in magnificent springs and miniature rivers, with sulphur and soda springs intermixed. Above this ice-field, a mountain of lava and ashes rises—this scaled, the real summit comes in sight, a bare crag of rocks, so hidden by the surrounding precipices as to be undistinguishable from below. Before M. Diehl scaled this crag, and feasted his eyes upon the glorious, awe-inspiring prospect around and beneath, he crossed a third snow-field, and found the original and main crater of this immense volcano, a concavity covering many acres, and hemmed in by a ridge of Titanic rocks. Here he came upon the long-sought sulphur springs, by which he sat down and ate a welcome meal, and warmed his frozen fingers in their genial waters. Having ascended the few hundred feet which divided him from the extreme summit, he passed many hours in contemplation of the vast world of fertility, wealth, majesty, and beauty, over which imperial Shasta keeps his immemorial ward. He could not, indeed, actually see the wide waters of the Pacific, but fancy revealed them to him as he gazed to the westward, beyond the coast ranges; mountain towering above mountain, their peaks glittering above the mist-wreaths, down to the golden-sanded shore. Northward lay Oregon, with her long sweeps of fertile valley, her deep, wide, winding lakes, her mountain-peaks, her noble pine-forests. When the eyes had feasted on these things, and the soul had grown satisfied with their beauty, the pilgrim had but to turn his gaze eastward, and, far over the sierras, it rested upon Utah, with its sparkling, numerous lakes, in their emerald setting; and then away, beyond the boundless stretch of the savannahs, into the desert. To the south lay the land through which we have journeyed in fancy; threaded by the pleteous waters of the Sacramento, until they were lost in the smoke and the haze of the great cities. The day was clear and beautiful, as days are clear and beautiful in golden California, and that might have been the bridal noon of the earth, on which M. Diehl planted a banner, alongside that of the stars and stripes, which a former traveller had left to flout the breeze, upon Shasta's summit, in 1852.

This brief sketch notices but a few of the wonders and beauties of California. The Yo-semité Valley alone would afford material for a volume, surpassing in richness of detail, in picturesqueness, in sublimity, nay, even in terror, the wildest imagina-

tions of the romancer and the artist. A 'land of noon' is this rich and rare country in the west, bathed in the sunshine, and laden with beauty as a garment, and with wealth as an inexhaustible dower; a land of pleasant rivers, of mighty waterfalls, of long sunny lapses of verdure, and decked with transcendent flowers and foliage; a land on which the Divine Will has conferred all the best and rarest gifts which the Divine Power has created—a joy to the soul of the traveller, the artist, and the student for ever, a treasure-house of nations in the ages to come.

FLOWERS FROM HOME.

FLOWERS! beautiful flowers!

But these a perfume bear

Richer than if from eastern bowers

They brought their blossoms rare.

These delicate blossoms hung

Round a green porch far away,

Where the music of young laughter rung

From children at their play;

And within, one of graver air

Gazed thoughtfully the while,

Marking the place of a vacant chair,

Missing an answering smile.

Say, hast thou the secret read

Of Association's lore,

When Memory suddenly outspread

Its strange life-gathered store!

Words that have long been hid;

Tones that for years have lain,

By the heart's cunning treasured

In pearl shells of the brain.

Quick as the chemist's spark

Awakened can dispense

Through myriad miles of ocean dark

Its bright intelligence,

An odour or a tone

O'er a life's barren track

Of unremembered hours has flown,

Bringing to manhood back

The maddening of a draught

From Passion's flowers distilled;

Or soberer cup, securely quaffed,

Of promises fulfilled.

So the sweet scent of spring

From these odorous petals flung,

Brings visions of fairy ordering,

'Neath their dewy clusters hung.

I see the well-known group

At the far-off portal stand;

I hear the shout of the merry troop,

I see the outstretched hand

Chiding the tardy post;

I know the bounding spring

Of the jealous race who first to the host

The treasured leaves may bring,

The ring of the welcome cheer,

The old familiar tone,

The beaming smile, and the welling tear,

For love of the absent one.

On the 1st of July will appear the first portion of an original Romance, entitled

THE CLYFFARDS OF CLYFFE,

By the Author of *Lost Sir Massingberd*, &c.

To be continued weekly.

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